Released for Press use

NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

No. 78 TORONTO August, 1947.

MUSEUM EXHIBITS UNUSUAL GOLD ORE

In the early mining days, most of the world's gold came from placers—gravel and sand deposits in stream beds. California, the Klondike and Australia are familiar examples. Such deposits were easily mined, but today most of our gold comes from lode mining, requiring shafts, drifts and stopes in hard rock, and big mills, involving much capital. There are a few beach placers, such as the one near the mouth of the Yukon River, near Nome, Alaska, where the gold occurs in the beach gravel and sand.

Imagine a great beach placer, far larger than any known in the world today, being buried under thousands of feet of sediment and lavas. About 1,500,000,000 years ago, in Precambrian time, something like this occurred in South Africa. Today they are mining to a depth of over 8,000 feet, in some places, this ancient placer deposit. The ore occurs in beds of conglomerate made up of rounded pebbles and sand grains cemented together, not in quartz veins like our Canadian gold. This field, by far the greatest in the world, has produced about $11,000,000,000 in gold. A good exhibit of this unusual gold ore may now be seen in the Royal Ontario Museum.

YOUNG HERONS COME NORTH

Each year towards the close of summer, young herons of various kinds, hatched in the south, become possessed with the instinct to wander northwards, and southern Ontario's marshes become host to varying numbers of them.

The handsome American Egret in its snowy white livery, and the much smaller Little Blue Herons and Snowy Egret, are among the southerners which may be looked for here at that season. The big American Egret is a more or less regular visitor, and the Little Blue Heron (in its dirty-white immature plumage) almost as dependable, but the delicate Snowy Egret is a rare find anywhere as far north as the latitude of southern Ontario.

The big marshes along our southern border are their favourite late-summer haunts. The tall American Egret (standing almost as high as a Great Blue Heron) possesses black legs and a yellow bill; the young Little Blue has greenish-yellow legs and feet, and the Snowy Egret has black legs and bill but characteristically yellow feet.

These tourists remain in our marshes until the urge to migrate southward overtakes them in September or October. This annual wandering of young herons far to the north of place of birth, although an established phenomenon, may be governed by the availability of food, safety from enemies or may be simply the result of wanderlust, but the interesting feature of it is that the directive migratory impulse that carries them into the deep south for the winter eventually overtakes them as it does all other migratory birds which nest in northern latitudes.

CHILDREN STUDY BIRCH BARK INDIANS

The project of the Summer Museum Club this year is an overall one, dealing with the everyday life and activities of the Ojibwa of Ontario. The children ranging from 8-14 years will meet at the Royal Ontario Museum four mornings a week during August.

X-RAYING HERRINGS

Popular conception of museum activities is commonly limited to the idea that a museum is merely a place for the display of interesting or curious odds and ends collected over the years. And it is conceded that such an accumulation is of considerable historical value. But behind the scenes, important research in the hands of specialists is always in progress. Their investigations are a vital link in such things as conservation of natural resources, nature education and the clearing up of many problems which arise in agriculture and industry. Research in the realm of Canadian commercial fisheries is now in progress at the Royal Ontario Museum, and one phase of it involved the x-raying of several score herrings from Lake Erie. Information incidental to the project at large and of practical value, was gleaned by the x-ray method, besides providing permanent records concerned with the anatomy and pathology of the finnies.

MUSEUM OFFERS NEW SERVICE

The Royal Ontario Museum is providing its visitors with an added service during July and August. Gallery talks are being given both morning and afternoon, Tuesday through Friday. In August the topics are "Palaeontology" at eleven o'clock and "Archaeology" at three o'clock.

The guest book at the Museum reveals the homes of some recent visitors—St. John's, Newfoundland, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, The Hague, India, Shanghai, and Port of Spain, Trinidad. The Museum has welcomed many American visitors from numerous States, including Oregon, California and Florida, and Canadians from British Columbia across the Dominion to the Maritimes.

PORCUPINES AND ART

Even the keenest of nature lovers have a certain restraint when discussing the charms of porcupines. Dogs sorely wounded in encounters with the prickly fellows, or summer cottages damaged by them do not make happy memories; and to associate porcupines with art seems a trifle far-fetched. Yet the elaborately beaded articles which have become the most familiar phase of Indian art, are but the modern counterpart of an earlier art when dyed porcupine quills and not the glass beads of the white man were used by the Plains Indians for decorative purposes. These quills, and more rarely those of birds, were colored with vegetable dyes, cut into bead lengths and used to bedizen belts, head-dresses, moccasins, and many other articles. As shown in an extensive display at the Royal Ontario Museum, this decorative quill work was often of great beauty in both design and color. In the same collection are examples of glass bead decorations in great variety, and which occasionally reach the point where utility has been sacrificed for beauty—as when moccasins, soles and all, have been completely covered with glittering beads.

MUSEUM EXHIBIT AT C.N.E.

The Royal Ontario Museum's exhibit at the 1947 Canadian National Exhibition features the costumes and textiles made and used in the early days of Ontario.